(b) The recently concluded bidding round for exploration blocks under the Fifth Round of the New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP-V) has been most encouraging. 69 bids for 20 blocks were received from 48 companies of which 27 were from abroad. The average number of bids per block is the highest so far compared to the four rounds of such offerings in the last 8 years. The number of foreign bids in this round equals the total number of foreign bids in all four previous rounds put together. However, the bulk of the awards have gone to Indian public and private sector companies, who gave the most competitive bids. In several cases, Indian lead company has foreign partners whose share of investment will be in the shape of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

(c) and (d) The offer of blocks under the NELP is an ongoing and continuous process. Before every round of New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) is launched, consultations are held with all stakeholders to suggest and incorporate improvements. This time also, suggestions emanating from the study undertaken by Petrofed as well as inputs from other organizations will be duly considered for improving the Licensing Policy before launching the next Round.

Supply of Kerosene to Maharashtra

2913. SHRI KRIPAL PARMAR:
SHRI BALAVANT *ALIAS* BAL APTE:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is an acute shortage of kerosene oil in various parts of Maharashtra; and

(b) if so, the steps taken by Government to provide adequate supply of kerosene in the State?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) In accordance with the policy adopted by the Government of India in 2000, the Kerosene (SKO) allocation for distribution under the Public Distribution System (PDS) to various States/Union Territories, including Maharashtra, was reduced every year beginning 2001-02 and till 2004-05, taking into account the number of LPG connections released in each State/Union Territory.

In view of the requests received from various State Governments for increasing the allocation, the Government of India have commissioned the first-ever detailed study of Kerosene demand in the country, through the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) in December 2004. The final report of NCAER is expected by September, 2005.

Pending the report of NCAER, and Government taking a view thereupon, allocations have been maintained for the year 2005-06 at the level of 2004-05, including additional allocations made during that year to meet emergency/urgent demands of PDS Kerosene in States/ Union Territories. The decision about rationalizing the allocation of PDS Kerosene among States/Union Territories will be taken after examining the NCAER report.

The Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have informed that during April and May 2005, on account of limited availability of Kerosene from RIL/MRPL and reduced availability/production at HPCL's Mumbai Refinery, which was under partial shut down/start up condition, a part of Kerosene quota in the State of Maharashtra was carried forward during April to June, 2005. However, with the increased availability of Kerosene from RIL/MRPL and HPCL's Mumbai Refinery as well as imports, the Kerosene quota for Maharashtra was met in full during July, 2005. In order to make kerosene available by domestic refineries for the balance period of 2005-06, an industry meeting was held and it was decided that kerosene will be made available through all the refineries so that the kerosene demand for the balance period of 2005-06 is met in totality by the industry.

Supply of gas to RGTPP

2914. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:
SHRI HARISH RAWAT:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the quantity of gas which is presently available at Ramgarh Gas Thermal Power Project (RGTPP);

(b) how much additional quantity of gas would still be required to run the plant at full capacity; and